

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CAUCASIAN DANCES IN TURKEY

(Protecting Cultural Features, Their Interpretation And Transferring to the Next Generation)

Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, Kocaeli Üniversitesi ve Motif Halk Oyunları Eğitim ve Öğretim Vakfı
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Problems:

- Many people in Turkey practice teach and interpret Caucasian dances with out knowing which dances represent which Caucasian culture. There fore, they create a cultural chaos.
- Some people teach Caucasian dances with out knowing the differences between the dances practiced in Turkey and in Caucasia.
- Some Caucasian dances, choreographed by the Caucasian dance companies, copied from CDs or video cassetts are rearranged or directly put on stage as if they were choreographed in Turkey; The more, they are performed as a show number and named as Turkish folk dance. In fact, many groups even join a folk dance competition with these dances which are not part of traditional Turkish folk dances at all.
- Worst of all, people who have no knowledge and ethical values of caucasian culture, create imitation dance and music and make them a show number as if they were part of a traditional Caucasian dance or music. More over, these people do not even notice that they actually perform what we would call a cultural harassment.

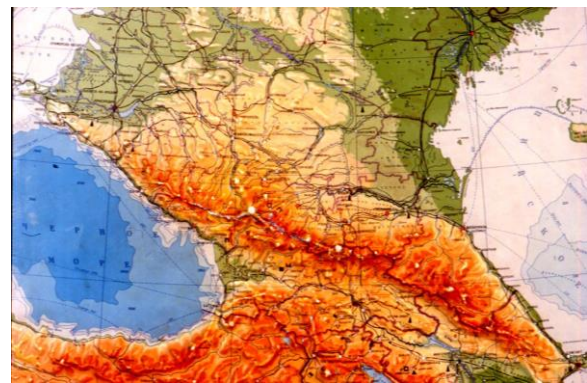
The research have shown that the Caucasian dances which are danced in Turkey and considered to be part of Turkish cultural assets originally have been brought to Anatolia from Caucasia. How ever, we should not miss the important point that Turkey shared the same land with Caucasia for many years before the resent borders were set. Thus, due to sharing the same land for a long time and also continuous migration through the years, today many Caucasians live in Turkey. For this reason, we have to take into consideration that the Caucasian dances have also been practiced in Turkey by the Caucasians as well as Turkish people. This shows us that there are two different origins that dominate the development of Caucasian dances in Turkey. One of these is the areas with in Anatolia where Caucasians lived that shared the same land with caucasia and reached to the caucusus mountains before the present borders were set. This area including present Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan is called, in litareture, Transcaucasia in English, Zakafkaza in Russian and Mavere-i Kafkasya in Arebic. The other origine is the areas starting from the Northern part of caucusus mountains including the areas between Terek and Kuban platoes that covers present Adgey, Abhazia,

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Karaçay-Cherkes Republic, Kabardey-Balkar, North and Southern Osetia (Alanya), İnguşetia, Chechnia and Daghestan in Caucasia (Berkok, 1958).

These areas were named as South and North Caucasia by some geographers. However, this naming describes these areas physically, but it does not culturally. Because there is a big difference between the cultures living in Southern part of Caucasus Mountains (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) than the Northern part which covers the countries and cultures mentioned above. When the geographic as well as cultural differences taken into consideration, it is not correct to call all of the Caucasian related dances practiced in Turkey as pure Caucasian; they should be categorized as Caucasian and Transcaucasian dances. Which in turn will separate Caucasian dances such as Adige, Abhaz, Chechen, Karachay and the others from Azerbaijan, Georgian and Armenian.



When Caucasians were forced to migrate from Caucasia, between the middle of 19th and the beginning of 20th century they largely moved to the Balkans, Middle East and Turkey. In Turkey they settled mostly around the central part of Turkey that is called “Uzunyayla” (between Sivas and Kayseri) as well as Kars-Sarıkamış, Bingöl, Kahramanmaraş-Göksun, Hatay-Kırıkhan, Adana-Ceyhan, Çorum, Düzce, Adapazarı, İzmir, Balıkesir, Eskişehir, Afyon, Konya, Ankar, Samsun and some other areas. During the period of migration, the Ottomans followed a special strategic settlement plan for caucasians (Habiçoğlu, 1993). All of the caucasians who migrated from different parts of caucasia and settled in various parts of Turkey, affected each other to follow a strict cultural rule to retain their traditions united as one, what they called a caucasian, even though they had different languages and religions as well.

In the period of their new life in different land, they retained, practiced and transferred their traditional dances to the next generations besides their other cultural values. However, during this period, they also had some changes in their dances. While some of their dances were forgotten and diminished in style, some new ones were created and carried to the present.



Kafkasya'dan Göç Yolları ve Türkiye'deki Yerleşim Bölgeleri (Nart, 2005)

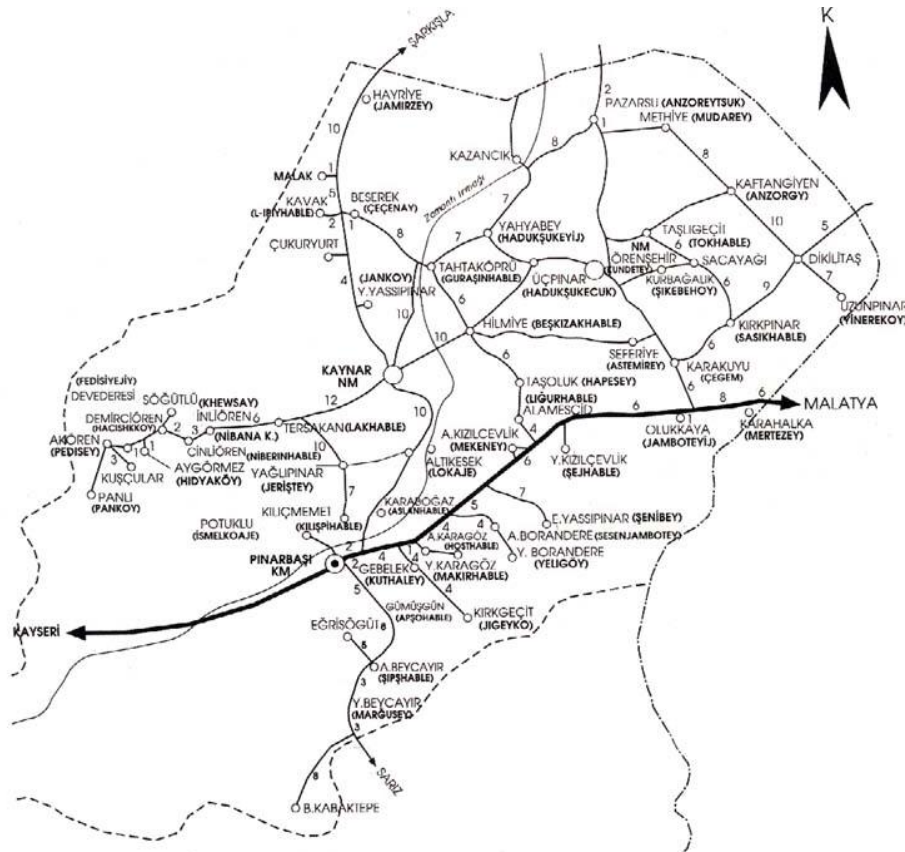
On the other hand, the Transcaucasian countries, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan retained and practiced their traditional dances in their own countries which were separated from Anatolia after the present borders were set. However, again, due to sharing the same land for a long period of time and continuous migrations to Anatolia, Transcaucasian dances were defused and practiced in many parts of Turkey as well. Thus, Caucasian as well as Transcaucasian dances were and still are being practiced in Turkey for more than a century.

Due to settlement of many Azerbaijani and Caucasians in Kars region, these dances were called “Kars Dances” by many people for a long time, even though, Caucasians who settled in different parts of Anatolia did Caucasian dances too. For example, in Iğdır, which used to be a town of Kars, apart from several Kurdish villages, only Azerbaijani dances were danced. In fact, to day people still do mostly Azerbaijani dances in this region. Similarly, Caucasian dances were danced in many parts of Turkey as it is stated above. Fortunately, it was noticed that Caucasians did not only settled in Kars but widely in Turkey, the dances began to be called “Kafkas” and Kars dances were separated in to two category as “mahalli” and “Kafkas”.

When it is looked Caucasian dances through their interpretation and retaining point of view, it seems like these dances that were brought to Anatolia at different time period, were practiced, retained and transferred to the next generations, more insistently and carefully than their original areas. To day we can see that some of the dances which were forgotten or even lost in Caucasia, are still being practiced and insistently kept alive by the Caucasians in Turkey. Because of their insistent behavior towards practicing, introducing and keeping the traditional dances alive, they gained an important place for the Caucasian dances with in the traditional Turkish dances. Therefore, there is not any hesitancy towards the acceptance and practice of these dances as part of traditional Turkish dances. There fore, the richness that Caucasian dances and music have contributed to Turkish culture can not be ignored. But unfortunately, these dances and music which developed from two different origins create a great chaos in Turkish culture today. For the reason that, even though some of these dances that considered as part of Turkish cultural assets and are being practiced in Turkey, were not developed by the Caucasian people who live in Turkey; but, somehow, they were copied and brought to Turkey in the resent two decades. There fore, they should not be accepted as part of Turkish cultural

assets. Especially, those dances which were copied from the original dance groups and started to be performed in Turkey after 1980's are almost definitely belong to the Caucasians living in Caucasia, thus carries their culture features; and, they should be accepted as Caucasian cultural assets but not Turkish.

How ever, it is unfortunate that, today in Turkey, most of these dances and music are being taught at schools, foundations of culture, folk dance associations, house of culture, cultural department of municipals and the similar places as Turkish dance and music by some people who has lack of knowledge and also are unconsidered about Caucasian and Turkish culture as well. More over, performing these dance and music with their groups, some folk dance teachers even join the folk dance competitions organized by the Educational, Sports and Cultural Departments of the Turkish government. Ironic part of this is that, some times these groups even win the first second or third places for themselves; while there is no place and value of these copied dances and music within the traditional Turkish dances. Fore this reason, today, the Caucasian dances and music that were copied and carried to Turkey after 1980s, create a real folkloric and cultural problem within the traditional Turkish dances.



Uzunyayla

There are two main reasons for us carrying this problem to a scientific platform. First one of these is, to evaluate their regional and characteristic features, separate, and also differentiate those dances that developed in Turkey and in Caucasia; and, give a clear description about Caucasian and Transcaucasian (Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijani) dances evaluating their similarities and dissimilarities as well.

The second reason, may be more important than the first one is, due to lack of knowledge about the characteristic differences of these dances in Turkey, the dances and regions are

mixed often times; and, this mistake is growing more and more everyday. For example, there are some respectful folklore specialist who do not know the differences between Azerbaijani and Caucasian dances that has been known as Northern Caucasian dances in Turkey. When looking at this from the characteristic and regional point of view, it is like mixing the Artvin dances with Blacksea-Akcaabat dancing. One understandable reason for this is that, the Transcaucasian countries, Azerbaijani, Georgian and Armenians are also practicing the caucasian dances. Therefore, people who have lack of knowledge about Caucasian dances mix them one with the other. On the other hand, it is the specialist's responsibility to research on his or her subject so they don't call all of the caucasian looking dances as Caucasian despite that they are not. The more, example of this very important mistake, due to lack of knowledge, is mostly made at the folk dance competitions that was mentioned above.

At the folk dance competitions that are originally organized to develop the folk dancing in Turkey, a Caucasian dance that is not developed in Turkey can easily be performed and accepted as Turkish dance due to lack of knowledge of the jury of the competition. Through a mistake like this, many Caucasian dances which were developed in Caucasia becomes as Turkish; and, worse than this, with these dances, some times, groups win the first or second places for themselves, as it was mentioned above.

Also there is other type of chaos regarding the interpretation of Caucasian dances that some unconsidered people make-up dances and music sounding and looking like Caucasian. Even though there isn't such a dance and music neither in Turkey nor in Caucasia at all.

At this moment, it will be helpful to give some information regarding the ethnicity of Caucasia and Transcaucasia, differences between culture and their geographical regions.

Tavkul describes Caucasia with these words: "*Caucasia*" is the name of a cultural and geographical land which was created and shared by different Caucasian peoples during a sosyological era throughout its history" (Tavkul, 1988). Considering this description, the



Natukhay, 19. century



Karachays, 19. century

name of "Caucasia" has to be looked as a geographical and political zone and cultures outside this zone should not be accepted as caucasians. For the reason that, the area which is called "Caucasian cultural zone" includes and describes many different caucasian peoples with different religion and speaking different languages, however, sharing the same culture, philosophy, tradition and folkloric values only with a slight differences (Tavkul, 1988; Saltık, 1997; Berje, 1999; Özbay, 1995; Ersoy, 1992).

Caucasian peoples who were included in "Caucasian cultural zone" as they are shown at the map, Abkhazians, Adiges-Circassians, Abazins, Kabardays, Karaçay-Balkar, Osetians, Chechen-Ingushs and Daghestani tribes such as Kumuk, Avar, Lezgis live between Black Sea and Caspian Sea. The area where these cultures live have been, geographically called Caucasia throughout the history;

and, this area including different cultures with their present borders are separated from Transcucasian cultures such as Georgian, Armenian and Azerbaijan.

CAUCASIAN PEOPLES

Caucasian peoples, according to their spoken languages are differentiated as in the list below.

Caucasians speaking Caucasian languages:

- Abhaz – Adige Group
 - Abhazs
 - Abazins
 - Şapsıhs
 - Abadzehs
 - Bjedugs
 - Natukhays
 - Besleneys
 - Temirgoys
 - Kabardeys
 - Wubihs
- Çeçen – Lezgi grubu
 - Nohchis
 - Chechenians
 - Ingushs
 - Daghestanians
 - Lezgis
 - Avars
 - Dargins
 - Andi – Didos
 - Laks
 - Rutuls
 - Tsakhurs

Turkish speaking Caucasians:

- Karachays
- Balkars
- Kumuks

Pesian speaking (Iranians) Caucasians:

- Osets
 - Digorons
 - İrons
- Tats



Abhaz, 19. century



Adiges, 19. century



Kabardey, 19. century



Transcaucasian Republics (Caratini, 1990)

TRANSCACASIAN PEOPLES:

- Armenians
- Georgians
 - Acarians
 - Svanians
 - Mingrellians
 - Kolhitiens
 - Lazs
- Azerbaijanians
 - Terekemes
 - Karapapakhs

When evaluating the chronological development of Caucasian dances in Turkey, considering the above list, areas and dances of two different origins which were mentioned before, come up again. First one was, the areas of the eastern part of Anatolia which shared the same land with Transcaucasia and included particularly the region of Kars, Iğdır and their close villages where Caucasian dances were practiced. The other one were various parts of Turkey where Caucasian people settled after they migrated. The third origin is the dances that were introduced by a group of professional dancers who also migrated to Turkey in 1949 and called themselves “*The Stars of Bosphorus - Boğaziçi Yıldızları*” (Koçkar, 1987). So, in order to evaluate the development of Caucasian dance in Turkey well and clearly, we have to consider these three different origins using the given information above. Also, we need to look at the Caucasian dances that are being practiced in Turkey as well as in Caucasia today.

CAUCASIAN FOLK DANCES(3)

Abkhazian Dances:

- Apsina
- Awraşa
- Şeratin

Adige Dances:

- Tleperuj

- Wuig
- Zefako
- Kaafe
- İslamey

Karachay – Malkar Dances:

- Tüz Tepseu
- Tögerek Tepseu
- Abezek
- İsteme
- Danis
- Tunçukgan
- Ziyabiy
- Kapateyna
- Mıçgı
- Aslanbiy
- Süzülüp
- Kiyikle
- Cörme
- Biynöger
- Dolay
- İynay
- Indırbay
- Marako
- Tepana
- Solman
- Gollu
- Çoppa
- Eliya



Oset, 19. century



Oset Women, 19. century

Osettian Dances

- Simd
- Zilga Kaft
- Honga Kaft
- Kız Dansı
- Çepena
- Kama

Chechen – Ingush Dances

Lovzar (Çeçen)

- Nohçi

Daghestani Dances:

- Lezginka
- Lekuri
- Akuşinka
- Kaş

- Vrasploh
- Üç Arkadaş
- Düğün
- Davulcular
- Hayat
- Pereplyas
- Saperniki
- Banavşa
- Çoban Dansı
- Tsovkra
- Alabuçey Baharay
- Şincir
- Cigit
- Razvetçiki
- Skaçki
- Hars
- Güzel Kız

TRANSCAUCASIAN FOLK DANCES

Ermenian Dances:

- Nazan
- Veri veri
- Sepastia Bar
- Mom Bar
- Zhora Bar (Jon jon)
- Archka Yerezanke
- Zaroura
- Khumkhuma
- Popooree
- Siroon Aghchig
- Ambee Dageets
- Guhneega

Georgian Dances:

- Parsta
- Kartuli
- Gandagana
- Horumi
- Samaya
- Tseruli
- Davluri
- Kazbeki
- Karaçoheli
- Kintauri
- Hevsuruli
- Mitiliuri
- Ceyrani

- Mhedruli
- Narnari
- Bağdaduri

Azerbaijani Dances:

- Yallılar
- Yeri yeri
- Novruzu
- Ondört
- Mirzeyi
- Terekeme
- Lalayı
- Gazağı
- Ceyran Bala
- Turacı
- Alma
- Lale
- Desmalı
- Enzeli
- Uzundere
- Vağzalı
- İnnabı
- Şalahı
- Mısıri

GENERAL RESULT (outcome)

Today, the Caucasians who migrated to Anatolia around 18th and 19th century not only continue to retain and transfer their traditions to the next generation, but also add richness to theirs as well as Turkish culture with new dances that they created in their new environment.

When defusion of the Caucasian dances in Anatolia is evaluated through the regional point of view, it can be seen that mostly Azerbaijani dances are being practiced around Kars and Iğdır. The reason for this is that, many Azerbaijani already lived in this area for a long time; and, many of them also migrated to these areas through the years,. Peter Alford Andrews, in his work “The Ethnic Groups in Turkey” mentions that the settlement of Azerbaijanis (Terekeme and Karapapak) goes as far back as the 1500th and 1600th centuries. “As *Karabakh Turkomans they fought for Ottoman Osman Pasha in Caucasia and returned back to Turkey*” he states (Andrews, s.98).

On the other had, Caucasians who migrated to Anatolia and were called Circassians in general continue to practice their own dances in their own settlements mentioned before.

During this development, there were some dances that got more popular than many of others. Two of these were “Horomi” and “Sheyh Shamil” Horomi was known as “Deli Horon” that was widely practiced around Artvin, Bursa, İnegöl-Hayriye danced by Georgian migrants. In its region this dance was named as “Hıhadzırı” after Aslan Abaşıdze, who performed it the best. This dances was known as “Deli Horon”by until 1970’s. How ever, when it was noticed

that it is so much similar to a dance “Horomi” that was performed by the well known Georgian Dance Company, it was quickly adapted by the folk dance associations and put in to their repertuary which originally was staged as “Horomi” by Vaghtan Chabukian for the ballets “Mtebis Gülşi” and “Snatleşi”. This arrangement is the copied version of this dance that is being performed by Georgian Dance Companies as well as by some Turkish groups today.

The other popular dance was the well known “Şeyh Şamil” dance that is only done in Turkey but nowhere in any parts of Caucasia or Transcaucasi. This dance was, originally, choreographed by Elbrus Gaytaoğlu who at the time was head of the dance company of North Caucasian Association in Ankara; and, the music was interpreted by a well known blind accordion player Şahin İşiner who played a widely practiced Lezginka dance tune known as “Massoviy Lezginka - Массовый Лезгинка” among Daghestanians. This dance was arranged for the large dance groups to perform as a show number. Among the Caucasians this dance is named: “Islamey” by Adigey, “İsteme” by Karachay-Balkar, “Maggalon” by Ossetians and “Lezginka” by Daghestanis meaning that belongs to Lazgi people (Koçkar, 1987).

About this well known dance, a prominent Azerbaijani field researcher Hesenov states his thoughts with these words: *“This dance which carries a Daghestani character is a world known dance. “Lezginka” gained a wide national value and practiced all over Caucasia as well as in Transcaucasia, Zakafkaza or Maveri-Kafkasya. May be this dance regarding its ritmic character closely suite to the peoples living in these areas. There are dances which is origins are known. These dances get wide reputation among the neighboring countries and cultures. When this happens, neither their melody nor their character will change. Azerbaijani dances such as “Shalakho”, “Uzun Dere”, “Innabi”, Georgian dances such as “Bağdaduri” and Armenian dances such as “Oy Nazan”, “Veri Veri” can be given as examples.”* (Kamal Hesenov, 1986). It is possible to share the same idea with Hesenov regarding unchanging character of the dances. However, when we look at the interpretation of these dances in Turkey, we can see so many mistakes made by so many folk dance associations as well as the individuals.

CONCLUSION

To day in Turkey, if not all, but most of what is done as Caucasian dance projects are copies of the professional dance companies who toured in Turkey after 1980’s. What is worse is that, people who copy these works from the CDs or video cassetts without acknowledging their creators, don’t think that they actually harm both of the cultures. We think it is important to know that Caucasian dances are part of Turkish cultural assets and are impossible to separate and treat them as foreign. But, it also is equally important to know which dances developed in which countries; too. These dances carry important characteristic features and represent different cultures. And, this is the only way to acknowledge, credit and respect to their creators when copying, practicing and performing them.

With this presentation, we aimed to evaluate Caucasian dances and music practiced and performed in Turkey today. Now we hope to encourage people to find a solution to the problems of wrong interpretations and misconduct of these dances. Which in turn will help Caucasian dances and music to clearly find their place within the Turkish culture.

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